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ART. VIII.—*The Social Condition of Woman.*

1. *Memoirs of Celebrated Women of all Countries.* By MADAME JUNOT. 2 vols.
2. *Noble Deeds of Woman.* 2 vols. 12mo. 1836.
3. *The History of the Condition of Women, in various Ages and Nations.* By MRS. D. L. CHILD. 2 vols. 12mo. 1835.
4. *Legouvé, Le Mérite des Femmes.*

INVENTIVE writing is full of common-place respecting Woman, drawn from the feelings or the imagination, sometimes depicting her character as a brilliant constellation of all the virtues, sometimes as a virulent concentration of all the vices and weaknesses incident to human nature. For instance, we take up Otway's *Orphan*, and we read in one place verses like these :

“ Who can describe
Women's hypocrisies ? Their subtle wiles,
Betraying smiles, feign'd tears, inconstancies ?
Their painted outsides, and corrupted minds ?
The sum of all their follies and their falsehoods ? ”

And again, at another page, these :

“ Your sex
Was never in the right : you 're always false
Or silly. Even your dreams are not more
Fantastical than your appetites. You think
Of nothing twice. Opinion you have none :
To-day you are nice, to-morrow not so fine ;
Now smile, then frown ; now sorrowful, then glad ;
Now pleased, now not ; and all you know not why.
Virtue you affect.”

Is this harsh ? Turn the leaves, and you come to the other side of the question, in that beautiful passage of the same Otway's *Venice Preserved* :

“ O woman, lovely woman ! nature made you
To temper man ; we had been brutes without you.
Angels are painted fair, to look like you ;
There's in you all that we believe of heaven ;
Amazing brightness, purity and truth,
Eternal joy and everlasting love.”

It would be curious, if in our way, to run over what the

novelists and dramatists have had to say upon this point. In the latter, especially, there is a perfect arsenal of the small artillery of stale reproaches on feminine weakness and falsehood. In reference to all such matter, whether set fixedly in books, or floating on the surface of society, we hold this axiom in reverent belief; there is no man of good morals, who does not admire and esteem the female character. Whoever disparages the female sex, is, of necessity, a bad son, and a thousand to one he is, in his custom of life, a bad member of society.

Reflecting upon the diverse forms under which Woman appears in the great classic writers of our language, we think it demonstrates that each one's individual temper and experience, much more than philosophical observation of general fact, have produced his particular representation of her social destiny.

Open, for instance, the poems of Pope and Swift, which abound with such coarse, bitter, humiliating satire of the female sex. Are all women, then, without discrimination, utterly destitute of delicacy and purity of sentiment, as those writers would have it? Or was there not some seated distemper in the moral constitution of their minds, which jaundiced all their views of woman? The truth in this matter is familiar to every scholar. They were each the objects of the devoted, but unmerited and unrequited affections of some of the best hearts that ever beat in human bosoms. What men deeply injure, that they deeply hate. Festering in misanthropical celibacy, the mind of each transferred to the canvas its own dark tints of spiteful malignity, in place of the reflected image they professed to copy. If we analyse the life and character of Milton and Byron, we shall there in like manner find a key to all the peculiarities in their conception of the social condition of woman. There is one poet and one prose writer, however, each pre-eminent for his intuitive perception of character, and his marvellous knowledge of human nature, who have written a vast deal concerning the female sex, full of instruction, good sense, good feeling and truth. We mean Shakspeare and Scott. They loved fondly, but wisely, and there was not, therefore, in their domestic history, any great disturbing fact to distort their judgment of the fair sex; and they have recorded woman as she is; rich in the virtues and graces appropriate to her career on earth; if with less of the sustained vigor of active resolution, and less of the analytical comprehensiveness

of intellect than man, yet with more intensity of purpose, and more instinctive quickness and force of thought in a given emergency ; when good, in principle better than he, when bad, worse ; in a word, neither greater nor less than man, but different, as her natural vocation is different, and both so far equal, that each is superior to the other in their respective departments of thought and action.

In taking up this topic, of the social condition of Woman in modern christendom, we avow, in advance, that we are not preparing to present a mere panegyric on the female sex. What we propose to ourselves, on this occasion, is neither a reasoned analysis of the general spirit of the gentler sex, nor a diatribe upon her defects ; nor a declamation upon her excellencies ; but a just deduction and estimate, so far as we are able to give it, of what christian civilization has done for the condition and character of Woman. After speaking of the leading facts of her history, we may best pronounce upon her true rank in the scale of society, and of moral and intellectual beings.

Without covering so much ground as would be needful, were we to attempt elucidating at large the condition of Woman in societies unconnected with our own, it will suffice, if, as preliminary to considering her place in the economy of modern christendom, we briefly explain what she is in countries highly civilized but not christian, in a purely barbarous state of society generally, and what she was in those communities, which chiefly contributed to form the spirit of christendom, namely in Palestine, in Greece, in Rome, and among the ancient Germans.

Of modern countries highly civilized, but not christian, we shall take but two examples, China and Hindostan, both as composing so large a portion of the human race, and as having really attained a high degree of general culture.

In considering the purely savage or hunter stage of human society, notwithstanding there be in different countries great diversities in the condition of the female sex, yet in every case we discover certain marked traits, which clearly indicate the deleterious effect of barbarism of manners upon the social position of Woman. One is, the similarity of savage life, in the nearest of all the social relations, to the condition of brute animals. In the hunter state, the supply of the first necessity of life, food, is precarious ; and this uncertainty of the means of sub-

sistence counteracts the natural tendency of mankind to a permanent connubial union between the sexes ; a tendency which develops itself more and more in proportion as society grows more fixed and stable in its forms. Hence, in many such communities, children are distinguished with reference to their mother alone whose name they bear, and not their father's. In some of those tribes of North America, which admitted of hereditary sovereignty, royalty of blood was tested by derivation from the mother alone, in reverse of the usage of all civilized nations. Such institutions or usages necessarily imply the degradation of the female sex. Another of the distinctive peculiarities of the savage life is the common fact, that women are held as property. In some barbarous communities, the wife is purchased, in others she is forcibly seized by her future husband and master. And universally we may say, at all times, in every climate, under whatever circumstances of local situation, savage man regards and treats the feebler sex as born to menial service. Woman is the humble slave of his pleasure, the handmaid of his daily wants, his laborious drudge of the field, the household and the journey, consigned to toil and subservience, whilst he, the proud lord of creation, aspires exclusively to the stirring chances of the chase, or the yet nobler game of war. Nor does this description apply to a class only of savage society. Such is the general condition of women in barbarous communities, however exalted the station of their rude connexions, how much soever they happen to be cherished by their untutored lords. Out of innumerable illustrations of this, which might be given, we select one, for its peculiar fulness, pertinency, and homely force and truth. Samuel Hearne is well known as one of the adventurous explorers of the arctic coast of North America. He was returning on his way back to Prince of Wales' Fort, unsuccessful from his second expedition, when he met Matonabbee, whom he describes as "a powerful and intelligent chief," and who undertook to explain the cause of his failure, ascribing it to the want of female attendants. "In an expedition of this kind," said Matonabbee, "when all the men are so heavily laden that they can neither hunt nor travel to any considerable distance, in case they meet with success in hunting, who is to carry the produce of their labor ? — Women were made for labor ; one of them can carry or haul as much as two men can do. They also pitch our tents, make and mend our clothing, rake our fires at night ;

and in fact there is no such thing as travelling any considerable distance or for any length of time in this country without them ; and yet, though they do every thing, they are maintained at a trifling expense ; for, as they always act the cook, the very licking of their fingers in scarce times, is sufficient for their subsistence.” Under the auspices of Matonabee, and with seven of his wives to accompany him, Hearne set out on his third expedition ; and in his plain unvarnished description of the incredible hardships he underwent, and of the excessive toil imposed upon the females of the expedition, we have a vivid representation of the servile and wretched condition of the female sex in the very highest rank of their nation ; for such was Matonabee, as expressly stated by Hearne, and as incidentally apparent throughout his narrative of the journey. And if, in some savage societies, the condition of woman was better, in others it was worse than represented in the pages of Hearne’s Journey.

While the people of Hindostan, it is true, have made such advances in certain of the forms and fixed improvements of civilization, that they cannot be deemed a barbarous people, still the practice of infanticide, and the disregard of chastity, are facts upon the face of things, attesting a barbaric degradation in the social position of woman. Yet there it is, that the widow proves how irreparable is her grief, by devoting herself on the funeral pile as a burnt-offering to hallow the memory of her deceased lord. But how did he earn such unequalled ardor of love ? We may read in the Abbé Dubois an extract from one of the sacred books of the Hindus, which expressly enjoins upon her not merely that she is to obey her husband as a master, but that she is to revere him as a god. “ When in the presence of her husband,” are the words, “ a woman must keep her eyes upon her master, and be ready to receive his commands. When he speaks, she must be quiet, and listen to nothing besides. When he calls, she must leave every thing else, and attend upon him alone. A woman has no other god on earth than her husband. The most excellent of all good works she can perform, is to gratify him with the strictest obedience. This should be her only devotion. Though he be aged, infirm, dissipated, drunkard, or a debauchee, she must still regard him as her god.” Such is the text. And these precepts, it is notorious, are practically observed in the domestic intercourse of the Hindus.

Nor is the state of things any better in China, as is well

stated in, if we remember rightly, Morrison's authentic translation of the She-King. "In childhood slighted, in maidenhood sold, in mature womanhood, shackled by the laws which prescribe numerous and unpleasing duties, or rather tasks to their husband's relations,—in widowhood controlled by their own sons, in all ages and states considered as immeasurably inferior to men, denied even moral agency in the power of doing either good or evil;—woman is considered by the laws of the country as the bond and appointed slave of man and nature, made such by the same law that gives to the sun its light and to the leopard its spots; and they find their fate but slightly modified by the opinions and practices of their husbands and fathers." No addition of ours to this comprehensive description of the social condition of Woman in cultivated and lettered China could augment its graphic force.

The Christian religion issued out of Judea; and our opinions, especially in Protestant countries, where the Bible is so universally read, expounded, and reverenced, are greatly influenced by the Old Testament, that is, the inspired history, laws, poetry, prophecies, and moral disquisitions of the Jews, which are incorporated into our literature and bias all our trains of thought. Society, as represented in the Bible, had already emerged from the barbarism of the hunter state, and presents itself in the three successive stages of the pastoral, the agricultural, and the commercial and manufacturing states, each being superior in civilization to its predecessor. Substantially the same system of legislation, however, regulated the whole period of time, from the age of the patriarchs, or at least from the exodus out of Egypt, down to the advent of our Savior. And it was not such as favored the condition of the female sex; for polygamy obtained, as in other oriental countries; and women were entirely dependent upon the men, who might repudiate them at will, and without cause. Such laws could not be otherwise than decisive of their general condition; and a careful study of particular facts will bring the mind to the same conclusion, which a consideration of those laws would lead us to draw. The persevering attachment of Jacob for Rachel shows that, in the patriarchal age, woman had acquired a value unknown to the hunter-life; but all the circumstances of their domestic history, so distinctly told by the sacred penman, show, at the same time, that their love was destitute of the delicacy and individuality, essential to the true respectability of woman. Again, it is observable that Sarah, Rebekah,

Zipporah, Ruth, Tamar, the wives and daughters of rich men and princes, appear before us continually in the performance of menial services, or humbly uniting in the pleasures of their lords, not, as with us, the cherished objects of respectful affection, and equal observance. And the remarkable incidents, which well nigh occasioned the annihilation of the tribe of Benjamin, as related in the book of Judges, when the man of Gibeah, instead of contending to the death, as we should have done in defence of the females of his family, offered them as a sacrifice to purchase the safety of his guest, are characteristic of the cotemporary estimation of Woman. To be sure, her condition improved along with the introduction of arts and manufactures into the country ; and what it was in the Augustan age of Judea, we see plainly in Solomon's description of a good wife : "She maketh herself coverings of tapestry ; her clothing is silk and purple. She maketh fine linen and selleth it, and delivereth girdles unto the merchant. She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness." Such, therefore, was the model of a perfect woman at the highest point of civilization among the Jews, — a laborious artizan, a discreet housewife, and withal, one amiable and judicious in her deportment and conversation. At the same time, even at this period, there is no social equality, no intellectual refinement, in the comparative condition of the female sex ; it is that of an Asiatic laboring under the disabilities of polygamy, just as in the Syria of our own day.

Pass to the Greeks, to a European population, though in and upon the confines of Asia. We know little of the heroic age of Greece ; but that little exhibits a manifest social superiority of Woman over what she was in Judea, because polygamy, with all its train of attendant ills, disappears. It is said in the Iliad, of bad men, that they deserve not to enjoy the rights of a citizen, nor the happiness of domestic life ; and as to be out of the pale of citizenship was to be an outlaw, we may judge, by the coupling of it with domesticity in the poet's mind, how much Woman had begun to be prized. And we think the fact, that in primitive Greece so many women were deified, and the female deities, as Rhea, Juno, Proserpina, Venus, Minerva, held in at least equal veneration with the male ones, testifies that some imperfect glimpses of the true destiny

of Woman was dawning out upon the age. To this hour, Andromache and Penelope are beautiful examples of conjugal truth and virtue. On the other hand, so many women, who attained a bad eminence by their vices, Medea, Phædra, Helen, Clytemnestra, do yet attest the growing personal consequence of the sex, in this the cradle of the intellect and civilization of Europe.

Two republics, contrasted in all their institutions, stood at the head of the Greeks. In Sparta, every thing was forced, artificial, unnatural ; in Athens, the finely organized Hellenic mind, enamored of taste, beauty, and refinement, had free scope in the following of its native bent. Lycurgus impressed on the women of Sparta a character of hardness and exclusive devotion to the military success of the republic, at the expense of every feminine quality. To wrestle in the Palæstra promiscuously with men, and half naked ; not to know or conceive that which is the most indispensable, and yet the first and lowest of the virtues of a wife ; to rejoice over the death of a son in the wars ; to practice the crime of infanticide as a matter of course, if a child seemed to be of feeble structure : such was the education, such the character, such the habits, of the women of Lacedæmon. Not so in civilized Attica. There a singular state of things ensued, from the keen sense which the cultivated Athenians felt of the value of intellectual female society, acting upon their peculiar domestic institutions. Usage, more despotic and more tyrannical than law, exacted of matrons and other ingenuous women, a life of extreme seclusion. To live in society, to cultivate the exquisite social arts which give intellectual interest to the female sex, was to overstep those conventional boundaries of virtue, which admitted of no return. Hence, although in Attica and other parts of Greece of congenial manners, highly accomplished women existed, and held a pre-eminently brilliant position in society, celebrated by poetic and mimetic art, courted by philosophers, and enriched by princes. — Sappho, the poetess, Leæna, famed for her constancy to the slayers of the Pisistratidæ, — Aspasia, at once a Ninon de l'Enclos to Socrates, and a Maintenon to Pericles, — Lais, the glory and the shame of Corinth, — Phryne, who offered to rebuild Thebes at her own charge, and who could boast of a golden image erected to her honor in the temple of Apollo at Delphi, — yet all these were public wantons, who usurped among the spiritual and beauty-loving Greeks, that

estimation, which is the rightful due of purity and virtue alone, and which degraded irreparably, while it seemed the most to honor, the nicely constituted character of Woman.

Proceed now to Italy, and raise the veil from the domestic sanctuary of the Romans. There is nothing more striking, all through the history of the kings and of the early republic, than the new aspect under which Woman presents herself, so different from any thing in Greece. The Roman matron possessed the patriotism of the Spartan without her cruelty and coarseness, and the purity of the Athenian without her extreme seclusion ; she fell short of the modern European, in that intellectual refinement and high accomplishment, which combined with virtue, belong exclusively to Christendom. Her occupations for a long period, were such as to imply inferiority of condition. Thus, when the Sabines made peace with the Romans at the conclusion of the war occasioned by the forcible abduction of the Sabine maidens, it was stipulated that no labor should be exacted of the latter except spinning.* Hence an old writer, who enumerates the qualities of a good wife, to probity, beauty, fidelity, and chastity, adds, *skill in spinning*. Nay, the Emperor Augustus seldom wore any apparel but of the manufacture of his wife, daughter, and the ladies of his household.†

What originally gave consequence to the female sex in Rome was the necessity of seeking them, under which the infant people of Romulus labored. Thereafter, we perceive, in the important part played by individual women, what was the general consequence of the sex. / Hersilia, with her fellow-matrons, reconciled the Sabines to the city of her forced adoption ; the crime of Tarquin gave birth to the republic ; the death of Virginia destroyed the tyranny of the Decemvirs ; Veturia rescued Rome from the wrath of Coriolanus ; when Brennus held the city at ransom, the Roman ladies stripped themselves of their gold and jewels for the service of the republic, as they did in the equally desperate crisis of the battle of Cannæ. And where such a spirit earned to women such an estimation, it is not strange that it became lawful to praise them in the tribune, to pronounce eulogies to their memory, and to draw them in chariots to the public games, nor that we see in Rome, at this time, instead of the corruption of the Paphian Venus, temples to Female Fortune, and the sacred fire

* Plutarch's Romulus.

† Sueton, August. 73.

of the republic consigned in custody to the virgin priestess of the spotless Vesta.

In the decay of the republic, and the still deeper abasement of the empire, as the female sex still continues an important element of society, this consequence follows. Frequent examples of eminent female excellence occur, contrasted with cases of equally eminent infamy. If Cornelia could inspire the Gracchi, and Julia sustain the fortune of Pompey, and another Cornelia nobly share them for better and for worse, and Atia form the genius of Octavius, and Portia approve herself worthy to be the wife of Brutus, yet in the same age Metella could dishonor the household of Sylla, and Catiline and Clodius range at will among the best in blood and highest in rank of the patrician wives of Rome. So, in the next generation, we have a Julia Augusta, and a Messalina steeped in the very lees of vice, by the side of an Agrippina at the pinnacle of dignity and faith. And when the profligacy of imperial Rome had sunk to a depth of abomination, which no modern tongue can express, nor any modern mind well conceive, there were two Arrias, a Paulina, and an Eponina, who recalled the ancient glory of the best matrons of the republic. But there needed a new dispensation of religion for the moral reform of society in the days of the empire; nor that only, since the whole frame of society was corrupt; and nothing less than a dispensation of blood and fire could suffice to work its physical renovation. Long before the overthrow of the empire, indeed, Christianity had begun to make its benign influences felt in the condition and character of Woman; but as its operation covered a later period, and chiefly in that was active upon the present civilization of modern Europe, before entering upon it, we subjoin a few words on the social standing of the female sex among the invading Germans. For, while our religion is derived from Judea, and our intellectual tastes from the Greeks and Romans, the basis of our manners descends to us from the Saxons, Franks, and other tribes of the German race, who overturned the Roman empire, and established themselves upon its ruins.

Our most authentic knowledge of this great primitive state of modern Europe is derived from the works of Cæsar and Tacitus. The picture which these authors present to us, displays in part the usual features of savage life, in part others of a better aspect and higher promise. Among the ancient Ger-

mans, as in other like conditions of society, all agricultural as well as household labor was devolved upon their women, and the infirm or less respected male members of the community. In Gaul, the husband possessed the power of life and death over his wife. But in Britain, and especially Germany, it seems to have been otherwise ; or at least, if such were the legal power of the husband, yet custom had established more of practical equality between the sexes, than obtained in Palestine, in Greece, or even in Rome. The Germans, above all other barbarians, held in special regard the singleness of the connubial relation, and the purity of the female character. They married by the interchange of gifts in cattle and arms ; for the wife, says Tacitus, that she may not imagine herself beyond the thought of virtue or the vicissitudes of war, is admonished by the very auspices of incipient matrimony, that she comes to be the associate of her husband's toils and dangers, the same to suffer and the same to dare, whether in peace or in battle. But there is a still clearer manifestation, in another place, of our own modern spirit of chivalrous admiration of the sex, animating the rude hearts of these wild hunters of the north. The Germans fought their battles with their wives and families near at hand. These, continues Tacitus, are the sacredest witnesses of martial prowess, these its loudest applauders. Each one carries his wounds to his mother, to his wife ; nor do these shrink from numbering or exacting them ; and they administer food and exhortation to the combatants. It is had in remembrance, that their line of battle, when already bent and broken, has been restored by their women, with constancy of prayers and bared bosoms, and warnings of coming captivity, which they dread far more intolerably on account of their female connexions. Wherefore, the more effectually to ensure the execution of treaties, noble virgins are demanded as hostages to bind the public faith. For they think there is something holy and fore-seeing in the mind of woman ; for which reason they neither despise her counsels nor neglect her answers. Under Vespasian, we have seen Veleda, as formerly Aurinia and others, held by them in deep reverence, not with adulation, nor as goddesses, and yet withal as persons endued with special authority and wisdom. Is not all this finely conceived ; and an omen of what Woman is to be, when these uncultivated barbarians shall have been exalted, by religious and intellectual teaching, into civilized Christians ?

In considering this point, of the particular influence of Christianity upon the condition of Woman, there is a material distinction important to be noted. Certain effects are often described, as evidently flowing from the tenets and general spirit of our religion, although not directly and specifically aimed at by express inculcation of the gospel. For instance, submission to existing political institutions is commanded, notwithstanding the corruptions of the empire would seem to have been such as to justify, nay, to require revolution for their reform. And yet nothing is clearer than that the general tendency of the doctrines of the New Testament is to further republican equality. It is a religion for the universal human race. It associates sovereign and subject, in the same service of religion upon earth ; it ushers them into equal responsibility in heaven for good done or evil prevented, or the reverse, in the passages of this sublunary life of probation. It is emphatically a levelling religion, and of the right kind ; for it levels upward ; elevating all men to the same high standard of sanctity, faith, and spiritual promise on earth as in heaven. Just so it is, that wherever Christianity is taught, it inevitably dignifies and exalts the female character. Throughout the New Testament she is contemplated as a spiritual and immortal being, the equal partaker with man of all the offices of religion here, and of all its divine aspirations hereafter. We listen to prayer and exhortation within the same holy walls of God's temples ; we kneel in supplication to the same consecrated altar ; children are admitted into the visible church of Christ at the same baptismal font ; we mutually plight our faith under the solemn sanction and observances of a common religion ; and when the dearest bonds of blood or affection are sundered by death, there is left us the one admirable solace of sorrow, that the sainted spirit of the wife, sister, daughter, we may have lost, has winged its flight upward to rest forever in the bosom of the Christian's God.

We familiarly know how different in this relation are the opinions and feelings of that religion, which, in its single adoration of one overruling God, as in its respect for Moses and for Jesus Christ, approaches nearer Christianity than the old Pagan system of polytheism. There is much controversy, as to whether Mahomet did or did not teach that women have no souls. We have not examined the Koran with reference to the question ; but an author, whose learning, judgment and good

faith are worthy of all confidence, Father Feijoo in his elaborate *Defence of Women*, says he carefully perused it in the sole view to ascertain the point; and the Koran is in fact silent on the subject. And the intellectual, or rather spiritual, degradation of Woman, in the countries of the Mahometan law, is deduced from this silence more than from any positive text; and has a deeper foundation than text or doctrine, in the practice of polygamy, and the prevalence of purchased connexion, the standing curse of society in the luxurious climate of the Levant. Nay, the propagation of the sanguinary fanaticism of Mahomet and his disciples, in regions once occupied by Christianity, may be partly ascribed to the important difference between the two religions, and the superior correspondence of Islamism to the settled moral and social debasement of Asia in respect of Woman. A curious and interesting illustration of this occurs in the case of Spain, when the occasional intermarriages of Christian with Mahometan, and the intermixture of the Arabs and Goths by reason of the conquests made by each in the territory of the other, and the frequent residence or visits of Christians at the Moorish courts of Zaragoza, Cordova, Seville, or Granada, and of Moors in the Christian cities of Leon and Castile, visibly modified the manners of each nation, communicating to the Goths something of the Asiatic averseness to female independence, and to the Spanish Mahometan something of the chivalry and courtesy of the modern inhabitants of Christian Europe.

What we have thus reasoned of the influence of Christianity applies to all its forms, and to the institution itself as we are the witnesses of its operations in modern times and in the Protestant countries of Europe or America. But, in the early ages, when Christianity first impressed itself upon European society, other religious causes, besides the essential doctrine of the Christian faith, aided it in the noble work of elevating the social condition of Woman.

Whoever is personally acquainted with the usages of society in the countries of the Roman Catholic and Greek faith, which compose the larger part of both Europe and America, cannot fail to be struck with the reverence there paid to females of sainted memory, martyrs of old who have been canonized for their devotedness to Christianity, or the Virgin Mary and other females consecrated in the New Testament. The Virgin is,

perhaps, in all those countries, a more constant object of address for interest or protection, than even our Saviour himself; so much so that this very fact is, among Protestants, a common article of reproach against Greek and Roman Catholic Christians. In countries dependent upon the See of Rome, while the veneration of the Virgin Mother is not less intense than it is in Greece or in Russia, the veneration of other sainted females is more universal. Their images and their pictures every where meet the eye ; their festivals are of continual recurrence ; churches and shrines are dedicated to their memory ; their names are perpetually upon the lip in every hour of business or pleasure ; children receive their names, and learn to regard them through life as their special intercessors, in all seasons of doubt or peril, for the mercy and favor of heaven. This may be very exceptionable as matter of religious doctrine ; at least it is very abhorrent to the usages of devout Protestants. Its influence, however, in the middle ages, eminently contributed to exalt the character of the female sex. It habituated, and still habituates, all persons, of whatever condition, to the contemplation of feminine excellence of a spiritual, moral, or intellectual kind, in contradistinction to the less refined and ennobled estimation of woman in countries out of the pale of Christendom.

Furthermore, the individuals thus regarded with a veneration so peculiar as even to offend the principles of Christians professing the reformed faith, belonged to the vast body of women of the early ages, who by their constancy, their zeal, their sufferings, their self-sacrifice, their martyrdom, were living examples of the wonderful influence of the tenets of Christianity in purifying the heart and elevating the character of woman. In the impressible and enthusiastic constitution of the female mind, there is a remarkable aptitude for the peculiar doctrines of Christianity. We see the readiness of women in receiving, and their instrumentality in propagating, the gospel, in the inspired narratives of the Evangelists ; we see it in the teachings and reasonings of the epistles ; we see it in the writings of the early fathers of the church ; we see it in the innumerable cases of surpassing magnanimity and fortitude which honor the female name, through all the persecutions of the Pagan emperors ; we see it in Saint Helena, opening the heart of Constantine, and thus making Christianity the religion of the

empire ; we see it in the conversion of Clovis and his Franks through the pious eloquence of Clotilda. How, indeed, could it be otherwise ? What woman of sense or sensibility, but would cling to a faith which lifted her from the humiliation of long centuries into her appropriate sphere of moral dignity and spiritual value and influence, and thus redeemed her as it were from the divine malediction, which fell in Paradise on our erring mother Eve ? No wonder that Christianity commanded itself to the female mind ; no wonder that Woman was last at the cross and foremost at the grave ; no wonder that persecution did but prove her truth, and thus filled the Roman and Greek world with so many examples of female excellence honored and revered in the traditions of the church.

One thing in addition. We cordially concur with all other Protestants, and with many if not the major part of Catholics, in the condemnation of monastic institutions ; because we know they are unfitted to the advanced stage of our civilization. The times when they were calculated to be useful, have ceased to exist. But he, who is unaware of the important uses they had in the furtherance of intelligence, religion, and moral purity in the middle ages, must be untaught in the lessons of history. In the first place, they were the sole repositories of knowledge and religion in those barbarous times, standing like oases in the midst of the desert, green spots of earth environed with desolation and corruption. In the second place, they were sources of moral influence particularly beneficial to the dignity of the female sex ; for the inculcation of moral purity among the monastic orders, and the professed and apparent if not real exercise of it, had an astonishing effect upon the imagination and actions of the wild conquerors of Europe. Finally, they were the asylum and refuge of the oppressed, the destitute, the mourner, the thousands left unfriended and unhappy by the violence of the age, or unwilling to dare its dangers. Doubtless, crime and sin made their way into the convents, as into every thing human ; but we are slow to believe that corruption ever came to pervade, and permanently qualify, those abodes of the vowed servants of Christ. We do injustice to religion in itself, in supposing there is no truth or reality in the profession of moral rectitude. In fact, a large part of the reprehensible matter current on this point comes from the pen of **M. de Potter**, a systematic and inveterate foe of the very in-

stitution of Christianity. And his great object in collecting it avowedly was, to serve the cause of irreligion. At any rate, believing or admitting whatever we will of the alleged corruptions of the monastic institution, its beneficial influence on the character and condition of Woman, at the period when European society settled into its present forms, is a demonstrable fact in the history of Christendom.

Christianity, therefore, proved infinitely efficacious in elevating the character and condition of Woman. It began to work out this effect, even amid all the corruption of the declining period of the Roman empire. And its beneficial operation was yet more discernible in the sequel, when it came to coöperate with some remarkable peculiarities in the secular institutions founded by the new masters of Europe. For the barbarians, destructively as they pursued their career of conquest, yet brought along with them the germ of many things, which constitute, with good reason, the boast and pride of modern times. What they did towards the cultivation of Woman, would suffice to recompense humanity for much of the desolation and misery, which, in the long interval between their fierce eruptions from the North, and the renovation of civilized life, they inflicted on the European world.

How it was that the Feudal System acquired possession of Europe, belongs not to the present subject. Suppose it, however, to exist in full vigor ; and let us see wherein it affected the condition of Woman.

In comparing the political institutions of ancient and modern Europe with other great subdivisions of the human family, we observe that, in one, an empire is split into fragment-states, or smaller states are united in a single empire, by the transmission of sovereignty through the female sex, in a manner quite peculiar to Christendom. In the republics of Greece and Rome, no such fact occurs. Nor, even in the time of the Cæsars and their successors, do we find any instance of sovereignty and territorial power annexed to females, and transferred from one family to another by marriage. Among the Mahometans, also, territorial sovereignty belongs only to man. True it is, that revenues of particular cities, islands, or provinces are specially appropriated to particular female connexions of the Sultan ; but these are held, not in personal sovereignty, transmissible through the form of marriage in succession, but as a temporary appendage merely ; just as, under the Persian em-

pire, one city furnished the head-dress of the queens, another their slippers, and a third their girdle ;* and as the queen-consort in England anciently had queen-gold reserved to her out of the rent of royal domains, for specified objects of apparel and maintenance.† But the conquerors of Europe introduced laws of inheritance, which had the effect either of making a woman a feudal sovereign in her own right, or, at least, the medium of conveying the feudal rights of her deceased father to the person of her husband. Take the feudal law, for instance, as practised in England. For some time after the conquest, dignity and power were annexed to the tenure of lands in the usual condition of feudal service rendered by the holders as liegemen of the king, or vassals of some intermediate chief. He, who held lands of the king, was a baron of parliament, the immediate lord of tenants holding in like manner of him, and the qualified sovereign of the territory constituting his fief or fiefs. Some of these fiefs, or estates with dignity attached, were male fiefs, that is, limited to male heirs of the baron or knight in possession ; but others, and those not the least valuable, descended to his heirs generally, females included in default of male heirs. If a baron died, leaving several daughters, either the king selected some one of them, or her husband, to be invested with the feudal dignity ; or it remained in abeyance, or suspent, until by the extinction of other branches, there was but a single male heir entitled by blood. If there was but one daughter, she became at once a baroness in her own right, and her husband was the possessor and administrator of her feudal power during his lifetime, when it descended to her male heirs, with her nobility and rank, so that her hand conferred or transmitted, not wealth only, but territorial sovereignty and political distinction.

In some instances, to be sure, these institutions operated hardly upon the affections of a woman, by restricting her freedom of choice in the bestowment of her hand. An heiress was the ward of her feudal superior ; and his interest, as the political chief, was to be consulted in the disposition of her person, because involving that of her estates and vassals. The ancient records of the exchequer, says Edmund Burke,

* Cicero. *Orat. in Verrem*, L. III, c. 33.

† *Blackstone's Commentary*, Vol. I, p. 221.

afford many instances, where some women purchased by heavy fines the privilege of a single life, some the free choice of a husband, others the liberty of rejecting some one particularly disagreeable. And there are not wanting examples, where a woman, having offered a considerable fine to escape marriage with a certain person, the suitor on the other hand has outbid her, and has thus effected his object avowedly against her inclination. Notwithstanding the occurrence of such abuses, the general operation of the feudal law of succession was to augment the importance and respectability of women ; for the lord depended very much upon the good will of his vassals ; and the particular instances of misrule in question, show that woman had at least a will to be consulted and conciliated. And, if herself a great vassal, she exercised a direct personal power in public affairs, which of necessity made her to be feared and regarded. In England, for instance, abbesses attended parliament in person. Lay peeresses did not appear in person, but they nominated their proxies just like lay peers ; and in the parliament of the 31 Edward III, it appears there were ten peeresses, who thus voted by proxy among the great barons. And previous to the passage of the Reform Bill, females, as proprietors of boroughs, could and did in various cases hold and exercise the right of returning members to the House of Commons.

Such was the principle. And to comprehend thoroughly its political operation, let us consider it in the cases of great states, rather than in the obscurer examples of subordinate feudal sovereignties. In France, a peculiar text called the Salic law, whose origin is lost in the darkness of the barbarous ages, excluded the female line from the throne ; but in all the other great monarchies of Europe, and even in the feudal subdivisions of France itself, there was no distinction in this respect between the regal and any other dignity. Thus it happened, by the marriage of English princes with French heiresses, that Guienne, Anjou, and other provinces of France, became subject to England. Nay, the English long denied the force of the Salic law itself ; in pursuance of which Henry V, like his predecessor, Edward III, invaded France, claiming the crown through a female, in preference to a male heir nearly related to the last monarch ; and the kings of England, until near to our own day, continued to style themselves kings of France. Thus, in process of time, some of the large French fiefs be-

came vested in the crown. Thus Catalonia was united to Aragon, and Aragon to Castile. And thus the grandson of a duke of Austria came to be master of the Netherlands, Bohemia, Hungary, Germany, and Spain. To say nothing of women, who, like Boadicea of ancient Britain, ascended the throne themselves, and either remained unmarried, as Elizabeth Tudor, and Christina of Sweden, or if married, yet retained still the government of their hereditary dominions, as Mary Tudor, and Anne Stuart of England, Mary of Scotland, Isabel of Castile, and Maria Theresa of Hungary ; at the present time, Spain and Portugal have youthful queens for their sovereigns, and Great Britain will, in all probability, devolve on a princess likewise, through marriage with whom the crowns of each of those countries may pass into a foreign house ; just in the same way that a Bourbon originally acquired Spain, and a Guelph inherited Great Britain.

It requires no extended argument to show the efficacy of such laws in imparting personal respectability to Woman. In the first place, the world saw her actually possessed of power, and invested with all its external insignia, its pomp, and its imposing circumstances. In the second place, she became an object of desire and pursuit to the other sex, not merely because, as in other countries, she might confer wealth in the bestowment of her hand, but because rank, power, and sovereignty itself passed by her to her husband and to her descendants. Proceed we, therefore, to the social state of the Franks and Normans, so as to see what influence that had upon the condition of Woman.

One of the most eminent statesmen and profound scholars of our day, M. Guizot, ascribes much of the importance of Woman in the social relation of modern Christendom to the peculiar mode of life adopted by the northern invaders almost universally, in connexion with, or in consequence of the introduction of the Feudal System. Each baron or landholder established himself in some elevated or otherwise defensible spot, which he fortified, constructing there his feudal castle, where he lived in solitary independence. Who are the inmates of his castle ? His wife, his children, his domestics, his military retainers, perhaps a small number of freemen who have no lands themselves, and attach themselves to his fortune. Around the foot of his castle is grouped a little settlement, chiefly composed of serfs, who cultivate his domain, and

look to the castle and its military occupants for protection in all emergencies of danger. Under such circumstances, the life of each individual of ingenuous condition, except when he was engaged in the chase, or in expeditions of war, was emphatically domestic. In Rome, as in Greece, the life of men was, on the other hand, civic. They dwelt in cities for the most part, repairing to the country only for temporary recreation. The private dwellings even of the wealthy were no wise calculated for what we know as domestic comfort and enjoyment. They had sumptuous dining halls, but none of the commodious apartments for retirement and repose, none of the bright saloons for conversation and domestic association, which belong to modern residences. The social intercourse of men was carried on at the baths, in the forum, and under the basilica, which decorated every considerable town or city. Those of the highest rank in society depended upon the good will and the votes of their fellow-townspeople for every thing which distinguished life, or made it useful and durable. Hence the great Roman statesman would have his dwelling so constructed that all the citizens of Rome might overlook him in every act and movement of his whole existence. Whereas the baron of the middle ages, living isolated, independent of the world, even at feud with some of his neighbors, had few or no social resources except in the bosom of his own family, or in the midst of little circles of the same description, allied to him by affinity or friendship. It was for these narrow domestic societies of the baronial hall that so many lays of love and *fabliaux* of the wandering minstrels of that period were composed, giving birth to a delightful fireside literature, quite unknown to classical antiquity. In such habitudes of life, there was full scope for the development of that respectful regard for the female sex, which we have seen to exist in the forests of Germany and Scandinavia.

To the dignity and importance of the female sex, as produced by the combination of circumstances which we have described, namely, the influence of Christianity and the old German deference for women, developed in the peculiar social state of the feudal masters of Europe, there came finally to be added the institution of chivalry. This also had its root in the military usages of the ancient Germans; for the investiture of arms, the fondness for single combats, the painting of shields, and the presence of women at martial sports and exercises,

are as plainly recorded in Tacitus as in Froissart or Saint Palaye. At the present time the mind sees much that is exaggerated and extravagant in the maxims and practices of chivalry. Errant knights, roving over the country slaying monsters, combating giants and enchanters, delivering distressed damsels from the hands of cruel oppressors, and seeking adventures all over the world, are alien to existing manners and the fixed civilization of the day. So also are tournaments, jousts, and the deeds of steel-clad knights deciding battles by their single prowess. Amadis de Gaul would at this time be deemed a worse madman than Don Quixote de la Mancha ; and Orlando quite as furious in his soberest moments, as when he split solid rocks in twain with his good sword, for the jealousy of the false traitor Medoro. Civilization has accomplished all this, by substituting the reign of law for that of violence, diffusing knowledge, and infusing in society such notions of right and wrong as do away with the vocation of individual redresses of injured innocence. And the invention of gunpowder, transferring the decision of battles to the organized action of masses, instead of the rash prowess of a few knights armed in proof, and riding down whole battalions of helpless archers or billmen, has operated a similar change in the art of war, making it a game of skill, that is, of intellect rather than of mere physical force. But, in those times, when each one did what seemed good in his own eyes, and when every person of ingenuous birth enjoyed the right of private war, there needed something to modify and check the universal lawlessness of men, and to protect the weak, and especially females from being the victims of perpetual outrage. The evils of the social state, sooner or later work out their own cure. What the world fell upon, as a remedy for the disordered condition of things which we have described, was the institution of chivalry, consisting in the voluntary association of men as knights pledged by promises, and solemn religious sanctions, to do that justice to each other and to society as a point of honor, which the law of the land did not exact, or had no means to enforce. To guard and protect the female sex, in that universal dissolution of society, was the pressing necessity ; and it became of course the first point of honor, in the heart of a good knight. He was educated in the baronial hall of his feudal lord ; he waited on its mistress as her page ; he followed its master in battle as his faithful esquire ; in the bower, he ac-

quired the sentiments and the language of courtesy, gallantry and truth; in the court-yard, he trained himself to the feats of arms; in the field, he emulated the prowess of his lord; and thus he grew up to be at once, a brave soldier and a true gentleman. He learned to vow himself to the cause of his lady-love; he wore her scarf in the tourney; he silently invoked her name as he dashed into the mêlée; and reflectively he respected the whole sex, through his admiration of her whom he followed as the lode-star of his life, and adored as second only to his God. We are not drawing a picture of imaginary scenes proper only to the page of a romance;—it is the reality so beautifully described by Burke; “that generous loyalty to rank and sex, that proud submission, that dignified obedience, that subordination of the heart, which kept alive, even in servitude itself, the spirit of an exalted freedom; that untaught grace of life, that sensibility of principle, that chastity of honor, which felt a stain like a wound, which inspired courage whilst it mitigated ferocity, which ennobled whatever it touched, and under which vice itself lost half its evil by losing all its grossness.” It is the reality finely exemplified in the actions of Edward the Black Prince, showing by his whole life, that knighthood was no idle extravagance of the obscure adventurers of the middle ages and the apocryphal romance of Turpin. It is a state of things which actually existed, from the time of Charlemagne, or soon after, down to the time of the settlement of America; for at that late period, all the maxims and sports of chivalry continued in full force. France and Spain were ever the nations where it flourished in the greatest splendor. And in the history of the wars waged in Italy between the Spaniards and French, during the reign of Ferdinand and his grandson Charles, we read continually of jousts, single combats, extravagant gallantry, and all the incidents of the early days of chivalry. Gonzalo de Cordova, commander of the Spanish armies, a wise and shrewd man, as well as a brave one; Francis of France, himself; and Bayard, *Chevalier sans peur et sans reproche*, a great noble and an eminent general officer, not less than a knight; these were at the very head of the order, mirrors of courtesy, gallantry and honor, and superlatively famous as such through all Europe.

Thus have we explained, as briefly as we might, the facts in the history of civilization, which moulded the condition of Woman, and gave to the social relations of the sexes the body

and general outline, which it wore at the time of the discovery of America. Since that period, the social position of the female sex, which it attained under the continued impulse of Christianity and chivalry, has been modified by two new facts, the progress of intellectual refinement and of the useful arts. Pre-supposing the original causes of Woman's elevation in Christendom to have had the effects ascribed, and then to have given a right impulsion to society, it is obvious that whatever develops mind, and augments its ascendancy in the world, must add to the respectability of Woman, who depends for her social relation upon the moral and intellectual influences she exerts over man. Accordingly, though chivalry has ceased to exist, yet the moral dignity and social equality of the female sex, continue to be distinctive of Christendom. If a woman belongs to the industrious walks of life, she has a relative value, enhanced by civilization, in her aptitude for any trade requiring skill, rather than physical strength, for its performance. If placed by fortune in a more elevated condition of society, then she is prompted and encouraged to the acquisition and the display of intellectual qualities, either in the intercourse of society, the duties of family, or the cultivation of science and literature. To appreciate this fact, we have only to compare the intellectual cultivation of celebrated women in our age, with any of the distinguished examples of it recorded in other times and other societies. No case can be found more favorable to the other side of the question, than that of the Romans. Preëminent in classical history is Cornelia the mother of the Gracchi, born of that Cornelian and Æmelian family, which seemed to have a charter of hereditary genius. There was a like succession of distinguished females in the Lælian family, three generations of which are commemorated by Cicero. Another Roman lady, Cœrellia, is famed as having gained the respect and society of Cicero by her talents and knowledge. What monument of either of them remains, to attest their intellectual elevation? — Wherein consisted their intellectual cultivation? — It is evident they were courted and admired, first for their good sense, and then for the grace and elegance of their conversation; but they were not to be compared to any of the great female names of modern letters, as, for instance, the Edgeworths, the Somervilles, the Martineaus, the Hemanses, of our own living vernacular literature. In fact no Roman authoress, deserving the name, is handed down to

posterity. The younger Pliny dwells applaudingly on the character of his second wife, Calpurnia; and his affectionate account of her conveys, we suppose, the best possible idea of the cultivation of an intellectual Roman wife. "From attachment to me," he says, "she has acquired a love of study. My books she carries with her, reads, learns by heart. What solicitude she testifies when I am about to plead in a cause, what joy when I have done. She has messengers disposed to tell her what assent, what applause I receive; and what is the event of the trial. She sings my verses to her lyre with no other art but love, the best of masters. Wherefore I entertain a confident hope, that our mutual attachment will be perpetual and will grow stronger and stronger with time. For it is not my youth or my person, which fail with age, but my fame, which she loves,"* Interesting as this picture of connubial felicity is, they are moral not intellectual qualities which Pliny praises, and that of being an admirer of her husband's writings and talents stands preëminent in the catalogue. What inferior female cultivation does not this bespeak, compared with the times, which produced such women as Vittoria Colonna, Maria de Padilla, Lady Fanshawe, Mrs. Hutchinson, Lady Rachel Russell, Madame Roland, and Madam Larochejaqueline, combining the highest excellence in the relations of wife and mother, and intellectual traits and acquirements infinitely beyond the Cornelias and the Calpurnias, those pattern wives and mothers of ancient Rome.

Before leaving the subject there is one remaining class of considerations, which we cannot well omit to touch. It may seem to be an anomaly of Christian institutions, that while women are admitted by inheritance to the highest of all political stations, in hereditary monarchies, that of the throne, they are excluded from equal participation with men in the ordinary political privileges. They do not vote at elections; they do not sit in legislative bodies even where the right of enjoying them is hereditary. Such women as Catherine of Russia, Elizabeth of England, Isabel of Spain, Maria Theresa of Hungary, might justify, it would seem, the imposition of any degree of political responsibility upon the female sex. True, but the only cases which countenance this idea, are of woman exercising inherited sovereign power, in solitary examples, constituting

* Plin. Epist. L. IV. ep. 19.

exceptions to the usual destiny of the sex, and these exceptions, when analysed, serving to confirm the general rule. They were not thrown into the vulgar strife and competition of honor, which necessarily pervade the ranks of ordinary life. They did not have to run the career of arms as the road to power. And the condition of a great prince in the countries of Christendom is rather that of one representing sovereignty, than of one actually exercising it ; since all the labor and responsibility and personal danger devolve on ministers and generals holding the delegated powers of government. Aurelius, it is said, contemplated the establishment of a female senate. Heliogabalus actually did organize one under the presidency of his mother ; but Ælius Lanfirdius who tells the tale, says the members chiefly occupied themselves with points of etiquette, of regulation of dress, and other like *feminine mysteries of state*. And whether the story of the Amazons be authentic history, or only a cunningly devised fable, it presents at all events a poor picture of what society would become, if our councils were filled and our armies *manned* with women, and they rather than men, or equally with men, discharged the external and political duties of society ; doing so at the sacrifice of all that delicacy and maternal tenderness, which are among the most appropriate and the highest charms of Woman. Hers be the domain of the moral affections, the empire of the heart, the co-equal sovereignty of intellect, taste, and social refinement ; leave the rude commerce of camps and the soul-hardening struggles of political power to the harsher spirit of man, that he may still look up to her as a purer and brighter being, an emanation of some better world, irradiating like a rainbow of hope, the stormy elements of life.

ART. IX.—*The Legal Profession in England.*

The Sixth Report of the Common Law Commissioners on the Inns of Court. London. 1834.

THE learned professions have heretofore been very justly held in high estimation in almost every civilized country. They have been regarded as the main pillars of every good government. The services and influence of the members of